



THE COLUMNS

Newsletter of the Pepin County Historical Society

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Affiliate of the Wisconsin Historical Society

April, 2019

GREETINGS! from your PCHS president -

Spring has finally sprung. I am happy to say I survived the winter and hope it was not too hard on all of you, your families, or your property.

Plan to attend our Spring Education Event on Saturday, April 27 when Brian Gabriel and Jim Alf will give a presentation/video about the Chippewa River at the Durand-Arkansaw High School cafeteria at 2:00 pm. We will also have a short business meeting to hold elections to our board of directors.

Deb Fisher and Rick Riggins have purchased the Little Plum Church and School and are restoring the schoolhouse with the intent to have it open to the public. They asked PCHS to join an effort to create a "history trail" in Pepin County and to produce and distribute a brochure/flyer highlighting not only their authentic early 20th Century one room school, but also the Old Courthouse Museum and 1895 Jail, the Little House Wayside, the Pepin Depot Museum and the Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum. The board gave its enthusiastic approval. After visiting the Old Courthouse museum this summer, you can enjoy a ride through our beautiful Pepin County countryside while checking out historical sites along the way.

The water drainage issues at the Old Courthouse have been addressed and hopefully corrected with much thanks to all who helped. However, work is still required on the front porch. [See article on page 2]

Ownership of the former Arkansaw Elementary School has changed and may do so again in the near future. Meanwhile, our plans to remove the Black School Bell Tower that stands on the property to a new location have been temporarily stopped by the current owner. PCHS plans to move the tower to a new home on Washington Square near the Old Courthouse museum.

Thanks much to all the volunteer hosts, museum staff and workers, and board members for all you do to keep the Old Courthouse museum vibrant with history and fulfilling our mission to preserve the history and traditions of Pepin County.

God Bless...

- Kim Wagenbach, PCHS President

PCHS ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Saturday, April 27 - 2pm

at Durand-Arkansaw Jr-Sr High School Cafeteria
educational event featuring

"Ferries on the Lower Chippewa River WI"

presented by

Brian Gabriel & Jim Alf

The Pepin County Historical Society will hold its Annual Membership Meeting and Spring Education Event at 2 pm on Saturday, April 27 in the Durand-Arkansaw Junior-Senior High School cafeteria in Durand, Wis. Chippewa River historian Brian Gabriel will be the featured speaker with his presentation, "Ferries on the Lower Chippewa River." Brian will be joined by the "Last of the Ferrymen" Jim Alf, who piloted the last ferry at Caryville, Wis.

Brian and Jim will explore 10 ferries known to have existed on the Lower Chippewa River from the Mississippi River to Eau Claire, including: Ella, Durand, Dunnville, Tyrone, Fair Play, New Meridean, Rumsey's Landing, Old Meridean (Middle), Caryville and Hadley's.

Brian has been exploring and documenting the history of the lower Chippewa River since 2005. He is originally from the Meridean area, Town of Peru, Dunn County, and farmed along the Chippewa River for many years. He has interviewed many individuals, recorded oral histories, collected many local artifacts and hundreds of vintage photographs, and produced documentary videos about the lower Chippewa River.

Brian is a graduate of UW – Eau Claire and UW – River Falls, and is a member of the Dunn, Pepin and Buffalo County Historical Societies and the Chippewa Valley Museum.

Jim Alf is author of *When the Ferries Still Ran*, which tells his teenage experiences as a ferryman for the Caryville Ferry in the early 1950s. Years of telling his stories and many words of encouragement led Jim to write his story. *When the Ferries Still Ran* is also a history of the Caryville area and the ferries that worked on the Chippewa River there for 54 years.

Prior to this presentation, PCHS will hold its Annual Membership Meeting during which the election of three members to its Board of Directors will be held. Board members whose terms expire this year are John Solie, Dick Schlosser and Tom Gamevicus, who have all indicated they are willing to serve another term. Nominations will also be taken from the floor.

SOCIETY NEWS

Repairs and maintenance issues continue to require attention of the PCHS Board. Moisture in the basement is a recurring problem, but with the assistance of volunteers and the Pepin County Highway Department, stormwater runoff along the southwest side of the old courthouse has been improved. Volunteers Gary Sweeney, Dick Schlosser and Fred Caturia, removed an old basement window, blocked it in, and backfilled the former window-well. The county highway crew then installed a 75 ft. long, 10 ft. wide wedge-shaped layer of blacktop to better direct runoff away from the building to the storm drain. The basement has been dry so far this spring! Big THANKS to Gary, Dick and Fred!

A major repair project will be removal and replacement of the front porch concrete floor. A minor collapse of the floor at the southwest end required removal of the old carpet, which revealed other cracking and settling and raised questions about the condition of the rest of the floor. (Additional thanks to Gary and Dick for removal of carpet and broken concrete.) Staff is working with contractors to get estimates for removal and replacement of the floor, which will hopefully be completed this spring.

The board has approved installation of fans in each of the display rooms and is getting estimates for installation of ceiling fans in the upstairs courtroom.

The Old Courthouse Museum is **open anytime by appointment!** Call 715-672-5423 to set up a time.

Top 7 Events in the History of Washington Square

1. Courthouse opened, Spring 1874
2. Lynching of Ed Maxwell, Nov. 1881
3. Removal of county seat from Durand to Arkansaw, 1881-1886
4. Construction of sheriff's house and jail, 1895
5. Fire in courthouse attic, \$4000 in damage, October, 1931
6. Courthouse & jail listed on State and National Registers of Historic Places, 1978
7. Old Courthouse Museum & 1895 Jail opened, 1985

Memorials Received:

For:	From:
Sally Tschumperlin	Lee Grippen
Duaine Tollefson	Lee Grippen

Museum Notes

As noted in last November's "The Columns," the museum installed three new permanent displays during 2018; including a dramatic new agricultural exhibit, a gallery of art, and a country church display. The all new farm exhibit honors the courage, hard work and cooperation of early settlers in building the foundations of what became the most important segment of Pepin County's economy.

Huge wall-sized enlargements of farm and farm-related photographs set the backdrop for the exhibit's centerpiece, a scale model of the dairy barn located on the farm where the model's creator, Bernard Brantner, grew up in the 1930s in the Town of Durand.

The timber-framed barn features a gambrel-style roof with open-center framing, which maximizes open space for storage while shedding rain and snow quickly and effectively. Displayed in the museum, the barn appears to be hovering above its masonry foundation revealing wooden stanchions and livestock below.

The replica has its own history; it toured the state in 2003 as part of "Barn Again! Celebrating an American Icon," a traveling exhibit, which visited a dozen cities throughout the state and was co-sponsored by Wisconsin Humanities Council, Wisconsin Historical Society and University of Wisconsin Extension.

Bernard has generously contributed his time and materials to numerous projects for PCHS and the museum. He also created the Durand Depot replica and built numerous stands, wheeled platforms for display cases, a podium, etc. His biggest effort on our behalf was the restoration and reconstruction of the Big Arkansaw School bell tower. Thank you, Bernard, for being a great friend and patron!

Pepin County Historical Society

Officers: President: Kim Wagenbach
Vice-Pres: Dick Schlosser
Secretary: Lois Laehn
Treasurer: Galen Radle
Directors: Rita Conlin, John Solie, Jean Kannel,
Tom Garnevicus, Jane Jaffer

“The Making of Pepin County”

[The following is based on transcripts of the minutes of the first two meetings of the Board of Supervisors of the newly created Pepin County, held in 1858. Minutes were taken by U. B. Shaver, who was appointed County Clerk by the state legislature. He served as Clerk and recorded the minutes of the county board for another two years. Shaver had moved to Pepin a couple years earlier from Hudson, Wis. where he had help operate the Hudson *North Star* newspaper. He was a trained surveyor and had a fledgling real estate business in Pepin when he started his newspaper, the North Pepin *Independent*, in late 1856.]

The first organizational meeting of the new Pepin County was held March 15, 1858, in the office of Ulysses B. Shaver in the village of Pepin. Shaver had been appointed County Clerk by the state legislature and Pepin had been designated the county seat.

Shaver called the meeting to order with L. G. Wood of the Town of Bear Creek and L.C. Davis of the Town of Pepin present. Also present was Willard F. Holbrook, who operated a mill in the unincorporated village of Arkansaw in the northern part of the Town of Pepin. The first order of business was to select a board chair. Wood nominated Davis and the two voted unanimously to approve. Davis then took the chair. Following approval of the bonds provided by the Clerk and the Treasurer, the Board adjourned for lunch.

Upon reconvening, Wood presented a resolution to divide the Town of Bear Creek to create two additional towns to be known as Lima and Albany; and to create two additional towns from the Town of Pepin to be known as Waubeek and Frankfort. This motion also established the places for holding the first elections of the new towns. Following Wood's introduction of the resolution, Willard Holbrook made the motion to accept. However, Chairman Davis refused to recognize Holbrook as a member of the board and chastised him for breaking in and disturbing the proceedings. The motion to adopt was then made by Wood, but the motion failed on a one-to-one tie with Wood voting in favor and Davis voting against. The meeting then adjourned.

The next time the Pepin County Board convened was for its first Annual Meeting on November 9, 1858. Meetings had been called prior to that on October 29 and again on October 30, but quorum was not achieved for either of these meetings. It is safe to assume considerable behind-the-scenes politicking and deal-making occurred between September and November because Shaver, the acting chair at the Annual Meeting, recognized without objection the presence of representatives of Albany, Lima and Waubeek, in addition to Bear Creek and Pepin. These new towns had taken initiative to hold local board elections the previous spring and had sent their chairmen to this meeting.

Simply stating the March 15 meeting was a legitimate meeting and four additional towns did now

- cont'd. ➔

2019 MUSEUM VOLUNTEER HOST LIST

May 25 - Rita Conlin and Pat Rosenberg
June 1 - Paul and Lou Simpson
June 8 - Judy Schwellenbach & Joyce Haigh
June 15 - Tom Garnevicus
June 22 - Sarah Schutta & Terry Mesch
June 29 - Sharon Smith & Bonnie Bock
July 6 - Sarah Schutta & Evelyn Pichler
July 13 - Diana Bauer & Carol K. Bauer
July 20 - Bonnie Bock & Linda Knapp
July 27 - Evelyn Pichler & Chuck & Lois Laehn
Aug 3 - Gerald & Deanne Rippley
Aug 10 - Dick & Judy Schlosser
Aug 17 - Jane Jafferi & Lee Grippen
Aug 24 - Don & Jean Kannel
Aug 31 - Don & Jean Kannel
Sept 7 - Don & Jean Kannel
Sept 14 - Sharon Gingras
Sept 21 - Rose & Glen Peterson
Sept 28 - Sharon Gingras
Oct 5 - Julie Rinholen

If a conflict arises for the Saturday you are scheduled as a Volunteer Host, please try to make arrangements to trade with another host or contact Lois Laehn at 715-672-4883 or Terry Mesch at 715-285-5659. Your help is very important to the success of the Museum. Other volunteer hosts may be needed for special events; if you are interested contact Lois or Terry.

exist would not be adequate to establish the necessary legal/paper trail. The new county board amended the minutes of the March meeting to: 1. show that Willard Holbrook had been present and a formal member of the Board at the meeting; 2. strike all words calling Holbrook out-of-order and chastising him for his disruption of the meeting; and, 3. insert his name among the "Ayes" for the motion to create the four new towns. The motion to approve the March 15 meeting minutes as amended was passed four-to-one.

[The lone Nae vote was by Henry D. Barron, who represented the Town of Pepin. The creation of Pepin County had been initiated by business owners and citizens from the village of Pepin and had not been supported by residents in the northern part of the new county. The "take over" of the county board by the four northern towns during the early stages of organizing the new county was a harbinger of things to come. The us-vs.-them jealousies and self-interests of each side played out in county politics from that point on. At the end of 1861, U. B. Shaver stepped aside as county clerk and was replaced by John Halverson of Durand. When Shaver was county clerk, records were kept and board meetings were held in his office at Pepin. Once Halverson became clerk, he received approval of the board to rent space for an office in Durand and the board began meeting in Durand. The county began to informally shift business to Durand. Eventually, a majority of the county officers lived in or near Durand. By 1868, the majority of voters in Pepin County had formally moved its seat of government to Durand.]

Pepin County Historical Society
OLD COURTHOUSE MUSEUM & 1895 JAIL
Washington Square
315 W. Madison St.
Durand, WI 54736

Find us on the Internet!
www.oldpepincountycourthouse.org

***Pass this newsletter on
to a friend & encourage
him/her to join PCHS!***

NAME _____
STREET _____
CITY _____
STATE/ZIP _____

MEMBERSHIPS:

- ___ \$8 Individual
- ___ \$12 Family
- ___ \$25 Friends of Museum
- ___ \$25 Business/Professional
- ___ \$50 Contributing
- ___ \$100 Sponsor
- ___ \$1000 Lifetime

And, here's my extra donation of \$ _____



The ferry at Caryville, Wis. in 1963. Jim Alf, last operator of this ferry, will be a co-presenter at PCHS Spring Education Event on Saturday, April 27th of "Ferries of the Lower Chippewa River." See inside for details.